

THE IMPLEMENTATION OF TEACHING ENGLISH WRITING TO YOUNG LEARNERS WITH VISUAL IMPAIRMENTS

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Abstract: Less methods of teaching writing were found significantly to some teachers at special needs school (Gine, 2012; Widdjantini, 2010). Therefore, this study aims at investigating the implementation of teaching English writing to young learners with visual impairments, difficulties faced by teachers and students in teaching and learning process in the classroom, and characteristics of students with visual impairments. The study employed a qualitative approach which involved 2 English teachers and 6 students of special need school in Bandung. The data were collected through classroom observation, interview and document analyses. The research findings showed that series of dictation techniques were used by the teachers in teaching English writing to students. Some internal and external factors might be the difficulties faced by teachers and students in the classroom. The characteristic of students were seen in terms of physical, intellectual, and social development. In line with the findings, the research was significant from two perspectives; theoretical and practical. Theoretically, this research is expected to enrich the development of literature of the topic, Practically, the results of the study can give information for teachers in teaching English writing to students with visual impairments.

Keywords: *Teaching writing, Young learners, visual impairments*

Children with visual impairments are they whose eyes sight are impaired, such as low vision, partially sighted, and totally blind (Lubis, 1995, p. 3). They do not include the people whose eyes sight can be improved by a medical intervention, such as contact lens and eyeglasses (Abdulhak, 2001, p. 26). Furthermore, Lundsteen (1978, p. 408) sees children visual impairments from educational view as children whose eyes sight impede them to function in education so they have to use special need, care and special materials during teaching and learning process.

To Lundsteen, characteristics of children with visual impairments are various. Physically, they are often be found as children who blink more than normal, holds objects unusually close or far away, get eyes' watery, read for short periods, slowly, and hesitate over words. Intellectually development, Widdjantini (2010) observes that the result of psychology test done by Binet to 2312 blind people proved that inelegancy of blind people are 98.8. Tillman and Osborne consider between normal and blind children. The differences show that blind children will sustain their life experience but, it is unfortunately that they cannot integrate their experience to others. Therefore, blind children can still study and communicate well like normal; they have a great experience and other sensory to move on (Widdjantini, 2010; Tarsidi, 2002). Moreover, the intellectual development influences the children social development to be independent people, sensitive, and critical because they are guided by the orientation and mobility training to move around independently (Turtle, 1984).

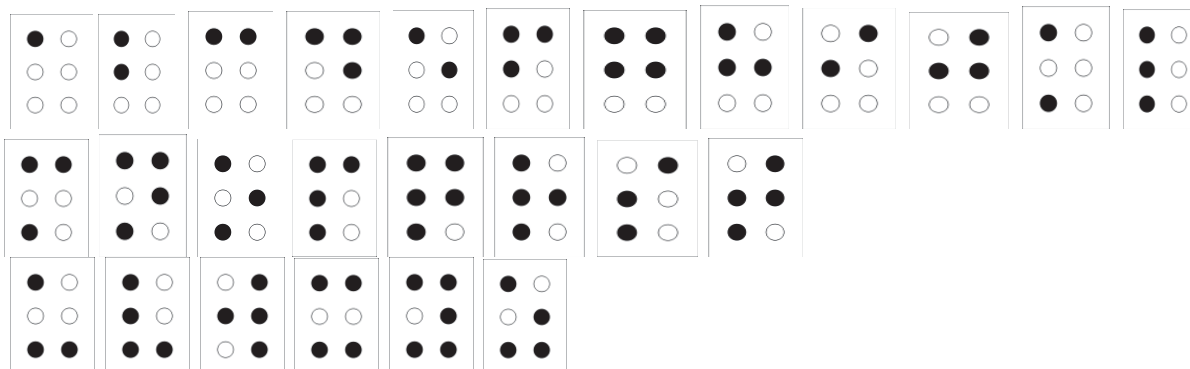
Regarding the explanation above, there should be specific materials, method and techniques in teaching visual impairments. Education could be a bridge to support their disabilities. Moreover, Indonesian government rule No. 77, 1991 noted the aim of impairments education is to help student with impairments to develop their skill (Sisdiknas, 2008).

In learning English, Bulsara (2007) specifies that students with visual impairments seek to find motivation of how to get much exposure of the four skills (listening, speaking, reading writing) to be able to involve to wide access in life. Saskatchewan (2003) states that expectation of students with visual impairments; they can be lead to be provided with appropriate materials and adaptive equipment to maximize motivation of getting targeted result.

However, it is unfortunately that some teachers at special need schools still found difficulties in teaching students with visual impairments. The most difficult techniques arise from how to teach writing to children with visual impairments (Gine, 2012). The difficulties came from internal and external factors Slameto, (2010). From the internal factors, teachers often found difficulties in students' intelligence and fluctuative interest in English. Meanwhile, the external factors highlight school facilities and time duration. Furthermore, difficulties in learning are also found in terms of font size, font type, spelling Braille neatness, and contrast (Gine, 2012). In writing, students with visual impairments use series of Braille dots. A previous study done in the same school of this research concluded that teacher used instructional method in teaching Braille, first, students are recognized to touch dots on a Braille board by telling the students which dots is as an alphabet that should be memorized. Then, teacher asks the students to write these dots by reglet (Braille tool) and stylus (pen).

Researches on teaching English writing to visual impairments are resulted to use dictation series and Braille as the writing tool to introduce new vocabulary (Tresnawan, 2009; Rudiwati, 2010, Eusi, 2011). Rudiwati (2010, p. 61) further argues that teacher gives tasks to the blind students to actively practice their Braille writing exercises; teacher reads the words slowly while students write what the teacher says and teacher asks students to read what they have written one by one.

Tarsidi (2001) says that Braille is a writing system which consists of dots configuration created by Louis Braille; it is read tactually by the fingers. Here are the series of Braille's dots from alphabet A-Z. In a box, there are 6 dots. The first 3 column are counted as dot 1, 2, 3 and the second three columns are counted as 4, 5, and 6.



Thus, from the phenomena above, this research intends to investigate the implementation of teaching English writing to young learners with visual impairments including their difficulties and specific characteristics owned by them.

Research Method

Research design

The study employed a qualitative research design for some major reasons. The first reason was that the study was relevant to the characteristic of qualitative method as the researcher observed directly (Mackey and Gass, 2005; Tomal, 2003; Bogdan and Biklen, 1992) the implementation of teaching writing to young learners with visual impairments. The second reason is that the researcher wanted to analyze difficulties in teaching and learning process in the classroom including the characteristic owned by students.

Furthermore, descriptive research design had been the research specification model of this study (Nunan and Bailey, 2009) to be more focused on the detailed information. Other characteristic of descriptive study was also presented since the study uses multiple data collection for the validity and reliability of the data gained (Nunan and Bailey, 2009; Creswell (1994).

Research site and participants

The research site of the study was a state of special needs school in Bnadung. His school was chosen for two major reasons. The first reason was because this school is the school centre for the blind students. The second reason was chosen because the school had complete facilities for blind.

Meanwhile, for the reason of representation in choosing purposive sampling, the participants of this study were 2 English teacher and 6 students of the second grader at one state special need school (Bogdan and Biklen, 1992).

Data collection

This study involves various data collection techniques (Mackey and Gass, 2005; Tomal, 2003).

1. Classroom observation was conducted for about 8 meetings to gather the data during the actual lesson, primarily achieved by watching, listening and recording (Moleong, 2007). The technique also led the researcher to describe the teaching cycle done by English teacher (Stake, 2010).
2. Interview was done simultaneously after the teaching process to obtain the information from both teacher and students about their difficulties in teaching and learning process.
3. This study also involved documents analyses (syllabus and lesson plan) which were used to accomplish other techniques of study (Moleong, 2007).

Data analyses

Data analyses were conducted to find the pattern, ideas and understanding about the result of the study (Merriam, 1992). Thus, the steps of analyzing the data collection explained below:

1. The researcher transcribes the data from videotaping, field notes, and recording of interview (Moleong, 2007),
2. All transcriptions are divided into the discrete point related to the research questions about the steps done by the teachers, that is, data categorization (Moleong, 2007),
3. From the data categorization, they were interpreted based on the literature review that had been formulated before.
4. All data sources were triangulated (Yin, 2003) to help the researcher to conclude all the data gained easily (Stake, 2010).

Findings and Discussion

The Implementation of Teaching Writing to Young Learners with Visual Impairments

To collect the data, 8 meetings of classroom observations were done. The techniques involved video tapping technique and note taking. Two teachers; one teacher taught English and another one gave personal treatments to each student, 6 children: 5 were blind and 1 was low vision.

In teaching, teachers taught writing through series of techniques. Tresnawan (2009) says that dictogloss (series of dictation technique) was the technique used by teacher in teaching English writing because the teacher needed to tell the English alphabet to students. The technique was also used by Tedick (2001, cited by Euis, 2008) in France as the sample. Furthermore, Rudyati (2010) elaborated that she usually gave tasks to blind students to actively practice their Braille. She reads the words slowly while students write what she said one by one.

To describe a visual word, teacher used narration. For example: when the teacher wants to tell "uniform". She said, "Uniform is a clothe we used to go to school, the color of the uniform is red and white" R 32. Students with visual impairments are not only focused on the grammatical and pair work but also to the whole class discussion afterwards about the links between meaning and form in relation to the composing process in writing activity. Realia or concrete object can also be used to represent the concept of word (Euis, 2011).

Difficulties Faced by Teacher and Students during Teaching and Learning

Difficulties Faced by Teacher

Based on Slameto (2010), two factors can impede the process of teaching and learning: internal and external factors. The Internal Factors came from learners' intelligence. Teacher expressed that his students were various: some are genius and the other are not, so the difficulties found in learning are only for them whose intelligence are low. *"Blind students' intelligence is same as normal students; some of them have been able to write and read well, he is cleverer than the other students"* R 14.

Meanwhile, it was found that the external factors were dealing with three things: source book, time duration and teaching media. The first one was that the school did not provide English source book in Braille. *"...They could only know English and wrote the words in the classroom through the teacher talk..."* R 36.

The second one was because of the students' limitation in sight, time duration was also a problem in teaching writing. The statement is: *"Sometimes, Time has been one of the problems faced by teacher when doing dictation because students write the words slowly"*, R 45.

The last one was incomplete teaching media. The statement is: *"This school only has some fruits and animal's realia, so we got trouble when we want to introduce the others English words"*, R 57.

Difficulties Found by Students

Students got trouble with Braille writing and English spelling error. 50% of children stated that when they had to write the English words in Braille, the Braille dots were often exchanged. Students often did the mistake because they had not mastered the Braille concept yet. Meanwhile, the second problem dealt with English writing system which was not written alphabetically (Browne, 1985).

Characteristics of Young Learners with Visual Impairments

The characteristic of students were seen in terms of physical, intellectual, and social development. Students' physical characteristic appeared on students who blinked the eyes more than normal, hold objects unusually close, and had problems with reading and written assignments, moved the eyes excessively, read for long periods, slowly, and hesitated over words. In terms of intellectual development, students with visual impairments were categorized as good learners since they could reach the materials by using other sensor, such as hearing and touch so, they could follow the materials easily. Meanwhile, in social development, blind students were independent as they were accompanied by the orientation mobility to travel well.

Conclusion and Suggestion

Conclusion

Based on the research purposes, the research concluded that two English teachers used series of dictation techniques in teaching writing to young learners with visual impairments: teachers described the words in details (narrating) and spelled out the alphabet, students followed what the teachers said, students jotted down the words, teachers and students practice all the words in the sentence together.

The difficulties in teaching and learning process were found by teachers and students. The difficulties found by teachers came from internal and external factor. The internal factors could be varies learners' intelligence, Meanwhile, the external factor arouse from English teacher qualification, limited realia (concrete media) English source book, and time duration

In addition, Difficulties faced by students during learning process were that they still had problems in Braille's neatness and spelling. In terms of physical, intellectual, and social development students with visual impairments can function other sensory well.

Suggestion

Three suggestions are presented. First, it is better for teachers to give more writing practice to anticipate learners' various intelligence. Second, considering the amount of words will be useful for having effective time. The last one, more Braille texts are better to be well prepared by teachers.

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